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For a Powerful Geography Education

Sonia Castellar¹ 

¹Universidade de São Paulo

smcv@usp.br

Carolina Machado Rocha Busch Pereira²

²Universidade Federal do Tocantins

carolinamachado@uft.edu.br

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For a Powerful Geography Education

Abstract

The *National Meeting of Geography Teaching Practices* (ENPEG) is the leading scientific event in Brazil dedicated to research on the teaching and learning of Geography and teacher training, established since its first edition in 1985. The 2024 edition, held at the *Universidade de São Paulo*, centered on the theme “*For a Powerful Geography Education*”, highlighting the relevance of Geography’s epistemological status in the school curriculum. The event reaffirms the importance of geography education in the development of critical and engaged citizens, promoting discussions on various themes, teaching practices, technology use, and teacher training. This work provides an overview of the achievements and advancements that the event represents for the field of Geography Education by fostering dialogue between theory and practice and presents the dossier made available by GeoUSP in this edition. The primary aim of this dossier is to encourage the community of Geography education researchers to invest in Geography teaching.

Keywords: ENPEG, Geography teaching, teacher training.

Introduction

The *Encontro Nacional de Prática de Ensino de Geografia* (ENPEG, National Meeting of Geography Teaching Practices) is the most significant *space-time* in Brazil for debates and scientific dissemination of research on Geography teaching, learning, and teacher training. Since its inaugural edition in 1985, ENPEG has been a key space for discussions at various academic levels, including undergraduate research (Scientific Initiation – SI), postgraduate studies, and research groups. Established as a reference event in 1985, during the consolidation of Critical Geography in geography education (Straforini; Canto; Amorim, 2019). ENPEG is currently a major event in the field of geography education, bringing together most researchers working in this line of research. The central theme “For a Powerful Geography Education” was selected to reaffirm the epistemological foundation of geography science, aiming to enhance its significance within the school curriculum. A powerful geography education emphasizes the teaching-learning process, grounded in the premise that geography education is indispensable for cultivating responsible and critically active citizens in the present and future world (Castellar; Pereira; Guimarães, 2021). The theme “For a Powerful Geography Education” was rooted in the necessity of deepening conversations about the trajectory that the Geography Education field has been constructing over the past decades. This trajectory encompasses the diversification of themes, the multiplicity of teaching practices in Basic Education, the incorporation of technologies and languages into geography teaching, and the developments in teacher training. Therefore, considering the current and past political conjunctures that reveal agendas, agents, acts/actions, and curricular orientations around Brazilian Education and, more specifically, the outcomes of geography teaching in classrooms (Castellar; Pereira, 2024).

The National Meetings on Geography Teaching Practices, as the premier event in the field, have demonstrated a growing interest in and production of research. Since the 2000s, the structure and organization of these events have emphasized the plurality of theoretical and methodological conceptions and currents in Geography and Education that underpin the field of geography education. In addition to encouraging broad participation from basic education teachers in state and municipal education networks, such participation has made significant contributions to the event, as these teachers analyze and present their pedagogical and curricular practices in the event’s activities. These discussions enable exchanges and debates among professionals at different levels working in geography education, stimulating the growth of research in the area, challenging the very meaning of “school geography knowledge” and, above all, strengthening the relationship between academia and basic education.

The 16th National Meeting of Geography Teaching Practices (XVI ENPEG), held in September 2024 at the *Universidade de São Paulo* (USP, University of São Paulo), presented 372 research presentations involving research and school practices, 17 Working Groups (WGs), 383 submissions to the Working Groups, 16 book launches, 19 workshops and short courses, 10 round-table discussions with 38 speakers, and 61 professors involved in coordinating the Working Groups. The invited speakers were selected based on the recognition and relevance of their research in different areas and themes of geography education and came from different countries, such as Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, the United States, and Italy.

The event was organized into Round-table Discussions and Working Groups (WGs) directly related to the event’s theme: For a Powerful Geography Education. In this sense, the

proposals of the 10 round-table discussions addressed topics related to public policies, teaching and learning, cartography, and contemporary issues such as youth geography. For the WGs, we followed the same logic, proposing 16 working groups on a wide variety of topics. The event also featured an opening conference and a closing round-table discussion. The opening conference, with the participation of Professor David Uttal from Northwestern University, contributed to the debate on spatial cognition and cartography, his research field in psychology. The closing conference, delivered by Professor Raquel Gurevich, delved into a theoretical analysis of the role of school geography; the professor is part of the *Rede Latino-americana de Investigadores em Didática da Geografia* (REDLADGEO, Latin American Network of Researchers in Geography Didactics).

The field of Geography Education in Brazil has sought to recognize the multiple practices, languages, and knowledges that constitute the diverse realities of schools. Beyond the support of legal frameworks, this pursuit is grounded in the recognition – through exchanges and research within Basic Education – that pedagogical practices are shaped by the continuous dialogue between educational theories and lived experiences. Such dialogue is constitutive of School Geography and its specificities, which must be observed by academic research and training actions in relation to geographic knowledge for teaching this discipline.

From this perspective, the fundamental discussion of the contemporary challenges for a Powerful Geography Education has come to the fore. A powerful geography education is based not only on the development of thoughts and rhetoric but also on reasoning, the latter requiring the use of a dialectical, argumentative, and inferential logic, resulting from the connections made by the individual with the experienced and perceived surrounding world, based on a specific vocabulary, strengthening geographic knowledge in the curriculum and in the lives of Brazilian youth and society. Thus, (re)contextualizing Geography means strengthening it, not dissociating it from its languages and its epistemic nature (Castellar; Pereira, 2024).

The XVI ENPEG proposed as its theme “For a Powerful Geography Education”, considering: i) the social relevance of deepening the theoretical and methodological foundations of the teaching and learning process and teacher training in Geography Education; ii) the analysis of the theoretical and methodological foundations that underlie the epistemology in the field of Geography Education; iii) the analysis of the trajectory of the field of geography teaching in Brazil over the past three decades, in an effort to understand its theoretical and methodological advances; and iv) the analysis of the changes and continuities in the field of Geography Education in the face of curricular policies.

Working groups and strengthening powerful geography education

The theoretical and methodological diversity in the different research lines in Geography Education is territorialized in the Working Groups at ENPEG. Some working groups (WGs) are well-established in events in the field of geography education in general, and not only at ENPEG. However, the 2024 edition innovates by proposing new themes that can not only ensure a space for debate but, above all, disseminate research being conducted in different institutions. These themes have social relevance and are present in contemporary research and were presented at the event.

Teacher training, knowledge and knowledge production in school geography

This Working Group provided a rich space to discuss the knowledge and dimensions of initial teacher training in Geography. The debates encompassed subject-specific knowledge, knowledge necessary to work in schools, and pedagogical practices in school geography. The didactics of Geography and its fundamental role in initial teacher training were also addressed. The discussions also covered teacher knowledge about learning rights and student diversity.

Theoretical-methodological foundations and socio-environmental issues in School Geography

This group focused on the debate about the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological approaches to socio-environmental issues in the analysis of geographic space in the context of geography teaching, textbooks, educational practices, and the training of geography teachers.

Multiculturalism, differences, ethnic-racial identities and gender in Geography teaching

This Working Group aimed to discuss race, gender, and sexuality as essential dimensions of geographical knowledge for teaching geography and training geography teachers. The group sought to understand the task and challenge of teaching geography as a mobilizer of social and civic practices that encompass the differences constituted by individuals and their spatialities. Additionally, the group aimed to contribute to reflections on an agenda articulated with social movements and on social dynamics from an intersectional perspective.

History of School Geography and Tradition of School Culture

A well-established theme in the events in the field, this topic aimed to reflect on the history and tradition of school geography. This involved a deep dive into the roots and foundations that shaped education and educational institutions over time, understanding how power relations, concepts, methods, and school content were constructed and transmitted across generations, thus solidifying the history of geography in schools within its own tradition and mode of knowledge production.

Youth and the Teaching of Geography

Various approaches to teaching Geography contribute to a better understanding of the world and strengthen students' sense of belonging, promoting more meaningful learning and encouraging them to stay in school. The Working Group aimed to reflect on the category of "youth" considering youth spatial practices and their possible interlocutions with teaching practices in the process of understanding school geographic knowledge that empowers young people to recognize education as an exercise of citizenship.

Cartographic Languages in Geography Teaching

This Working Group proposed reflecting on the importance of the semiotic system in the processes of producing, reading, and analyzing cartographic languages as school content,

as well as its use in analyzing and understanding the spatialities of geographic phenomena. It allowed for debates on theories, methodologies, didactic resources, initial and continuing teacher education that understand cartographic languages applied to geography education, considering Inclusive, Social, Imaginative, and Digital Cartography, from the ascent of cartographic literacy to geographic literacy, from the perspective of spatial thinking and geographic reasoning.

Geographical Reasoning in Geography Teaching

Which didactic-pedagogical movements are being developed in research in the field of specific didactics of Geography regarding the development of geographic reasoning? Motivated by this central question, the present Working Group promoted dialogues on research and teaching-learning activities concerned with the development of Geographic Reasoning, articulating cognitive processes with geographic principles, categories, and concepts. In this way, it sought to build theoretical and methodological approaches between the epistemological status of Geography, spatial cognition, and processes of constructing school geographic knowledge.

Multiple Languages and Digital Technologies in Geography Teaching

This Working Group brought together research and promoted debates that theoretically and methodologically problematized the use and role of multiple languages and digital technologies in geography teaching; their production and/or use as didactic resources; and didactic experiments. Among the languages, we can mention cartography, cinema, literature, music, theater, imagery, etc., mediated or not by digital technologies. And, regarding digital technologies, we can highlight platforms, blogs, websites, Geographic Information Systems, social networks, among others.

Active Methodologies and Scientific Literacy in Geography Teaching

This Working Group addressed teaching methodologies that enable student engagement in active learning processes and contribute to scientific literacy in Geography. Topics such as teaching strategies that stimulate geographic knowledge, the development of critical thinking, and different practices to integrate geographic concepts with scientific methods were presented and discussed.

Curricular Conceptions in Geography Teaching

This Working Group aimed to research that reveals a theoretical and methodological corpus based on questions concerning the following themes: Curriculum and school knowledge; Curriculum and Pedagogical Content Knowledge; Curriculum and Teacher Training and Curriculum Policies for Geography teaching; Conceptions of Curriculum and the conception of the *Base Nacional Comum Curricular* (BNCC, Brazilian Common Core Curriculum); Dilemmas and possibilities of a Skills-Based Curriculum; Geographic Reasoning, Geographic Situation, and Problem Solving.

Geographical knowledge in school education for young people and adults

This Working Group addressed issues related to teaching and learning in different years of *Educação de Jovens e Adultos* (EJA, Youth and Adult Education); didactic-pedagogical practices in Geography for EJA; geographical categories and concepts in Youth and Adult Education; and school geographic knowledge and the development of learning of EJA students.

Geographical Education in Rural, Aquatic, and Forest Environments

For the first time at the XVI ENPEG, this Working Group was proposed as a space to share and reflect on teaching, research, and extension activities linked to geography education and the teaching of school geography that are present and necessary for schools in rural, aquatic, and forest environments, considering their specificities. The idea was to empower researchers dedicated to education that bring together the subjects who inhabit these ecosystems (squatters, settlers, peasants, Indigenous people, *quilombolas*, among others), establishing organic relationships with them as expressed in their educational projects.

Methodologies and learning assessment in Geography Teaching

The Working Group was dedicated to discussing theoretical and methodological issues related to teaching and/or learning assessment methodologies in Geography. The space was open to studies of teaching methodologies and the processes involved in learning and assessment that occur in schools, especially those involving the assessment of learning in Geography and large-scale assessments at distinct levels and modalities of education, among other studies.

Teacher training policies: Student teaching, pedagogical residency and Institutional Teacher Initiation Scholarship Program – PIBID

The teacher training working group, now well-established, has served as a crucial space for reflection, dissemination, and sharing of fundamental knowledge essential for the preparation of Geography teachers and the ongoing professional development of educators in this field. Discussions encompass public policies for teacher training in Brazil within the context of geographic education research; the challenges faced by curricular internships as a cornerstone for teacher training in geography and the development of professional identity; the implications of policies and programs aimed at enhancing Geography teacher training; and the challenges of ongoing professional development for Geography teachers within the broader framework of educational policies for teacher training.

Geography of education

Approaches in the Geography of Education are inclined towards a geographical analysis of an extensive range of educational phenomena. This field encompasses research that spans from the examination of the spatial dynamics within schools to broader studies on the spatiality of educational policies. The unifying theme of this field lies in a more general inquiry: to interrogate the role of spatiality in educational matters, irrespective of their nature, scale, or modality.

Geography of childhood and early years

A group that brings together reflections on the field of Childhood Studies at the interface with Geography as an educational act, involves themes such as Geography and Early Childhood Education; relationships between babies and children with their territories, institutions, cultural artifacts, and non-human beings; research methodologies with/about babies and children; teaching and learning; diversities, differences, multiple languages, logics, and children's authorship, among others.

Inclusive special education in the teaching of Geography

The group was dedicated to exploring inclusive special education within the context of Geography teaching. This involved reflecting on the implementation of pedagogical practices and teaching strategies designed to ensure the participation and access of all learners, irrespective of their abilities or limitations. The presented works exemplify a sustained commitment to fostering equality of opportunities and embracing diversity within the classroom.

The presentation of the Working Groups highlights the academic and social relevance of ENPEG and its cultural traditions, demonstrating how the groups' themes align with the diverse research lines explored in the articles of this dossier.

Contributions and reflections on applied geography education

Given the importance of the event, this dossier presents some works derived from the reflections of the XVI ENPEG, seeking to reflect on the multiple theoretical and methodological movements that underpin the research, the multiplicity of themes of interest, and, above all, how the trajectory of geography education can be constituted as a discourse and a political action in defense of School Geography itself.

This dossier offers readers an opportunity to initiate, deepen, and expand their understanding of contemporary concerns related to geography education.

Professor Jerry Mitchel's article, stemming from his presentation at the 2024 ENPEG, examines how School Geography could teach environmental impacts in basic education. The text focuses on the organization of curricular parameters in the United States and their influence on environmental education. The theoretical framework emphasizes the relationship between people and the environment, drawing on the work of Susan Hanson (2004) and Yi-Fu Tuan (1991). A significant aspect is the lack of Environmental Education in teacher training and as a curricular content in the United States.

Jerusa Vilhena de Moraes and Eden Carli's article analyzes the application of knowledge theory through the resolution of physical-natural problems in the context of School Geography. The authors present research data involving students from the *Universidade Federal do Estado de São Paulo* (Unifesp, Federal University of the State of São Paulo), who developed arguments about a geographic situation: "Can the Borborema Plateau really be the main influencer of the semi-arid climate in Brazil?" The results indicate the importance of raising teachers' awareness of the impact of intuitive knowledge on conceptual learning and the need for anticipating didactic interventions to promote conceptual change.

In order to stimulate a crucial debate on learning conditions and training spaces, Professor Raquel Gurevich from the University of Buenos Aires analyzes the transformations occurring in the world and their impacts on educational processes. These analyzes are associated with the following questions: What paths can be enhanced in the teaching of Geography? What relationships between concepts and strategies can establish possibilities for understanding and interpreting territories and environments? The author presents considerations about disciplinary and institutional contexts and concludes with a challenging debate on the reordering of social life and the strengthening of the relationship between knowledge, school, and new social demands.

The essay “The mobility of public educational policies for teacher training and the spacialties of political agents”, authored by Rafael Straforini and Anniele Freitas, presents a detailed analysis of the construction process of public policies aimed at teacher training. The authors explore the networks of influence that connect international agendas, political actors, and debates in local spaces, highlighting the challenges faced in this context.

The research reveals that teacher training has been widely criticized for its overly theoretical curricula and its disconnect from the real needs of basic education, prompting changes in the *Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais* (DCN, National Curricular Guidelines) since the 2000s. To analyze this scenario, the authors employed the policy interpretation method “*follow the policy*” (Peck & Theodore, 2010; 2012) and spatial practices of discursive signification (Straforini, 2018).

Authors Lorena Rocca and Lucio Botelho analyze the landscape, which is often studied from a visual perspective; however, they present the possibility of having a multisensory approach. The article explores the role of soundscape as a learning environment, highlighting the importance of sound in constructing a sense of place and geographic learning. Drawing on Murray Schafer’s studies of soundscape, sound emerges as an essential element in understanding the relationship between space, landscape, and cultural identity. The research presented shows that through auditory methodologies, sounds are analyzed for their capacity to contribute to place-making, demonstrating how soundscape can be an educational tool. The authors propose promoting a more inclusive geographic learning and encouraging a critical and affective understanding of territory.

Based on the highlights presented so far, we invite you to read this dossier, which offers relevant theoretical and methodological contributions to the teaching and research of geography. The main intention of this dossier is to stimulate the geography education research community to invest in geography teaching.

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